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Editorial

Ghost Stories for Grown-Ups: Pictorial Matters in Times of War and Conflict

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Abstract: This introduction takes as its central armature Karen Barad's agential realism to provide a framework for understanding the essays brought together in this Special Issue under the rubric of pictures of conflict. The intention is to move the discussion with regard to picture making forward to more fully embrace the pictorial and the physical, the historical and institutional processes within apparatuses of picture-making. The attempt in 'Ghost stories' through the concept of a visual apparatus, is to shed new light and thinking on pictures as material objects; how they act and feed into our subjectivities, experiences and realities and to account for their currency, duration, affectivity and authority beyond transparent representation or symbolic meaning. In order to achieve this, Barad's agential realism is inflected by insights from Malafouris's (2013) material engagement theory; W.J.T. Mitchell's (2005) image theory; Jens Eder and Charlotte Klonk's (2017) image operations; Mondzian's (2005) understanding of the economy of the image, as well as the ontological concerns of new German art history and image science exemplified in the work of Hans Belting (1996, 2011) and Horst Bredekamp (2017), for example. In this framework, the worlds pictures create, and the subjectivities they produce, are not understood to precede the phenomena they depict. The picture, as the outcome of the apparatus which produces it, makes an 'observational cut' that simultaneously excludes and includes certain elements from its frame. As such, it has to be comprehended as party to processes which are both ethical and political. A fact which is particularly important during times of conflict and war.

Keywords: war; conflict; picture theory; image theory; agential realism; postwar

He did not firstly cast his eyes upon works of art, but he felt and saw the great configuring energies behind the works [...] Where others had seen determined and delimited forms, self-contained forms, he saw moving forces; [...] He always remained in the centre of the storm and the whirlwind of life itself; he penetrated into its ultimate and deepest tragic problems.

Ernst Cassirer's eulogy for Aby Warburg (1929), (translated by Didi-Huberman in [Didi-Hubermann and Lillis 2012](#), p. 55 fn 25)

Something of the inspiration for the framework for this introduction emerged during a walk in the hills on the island of Naxos in the Greek Aegean Sea. Along the way, and at the end of a short, well-tended path, was a small white painted chapel. Inside, as if to witness regular human presence, a single candle burned. Its sparse interior was further illuminated by light filtered through white embroidered cloth hangings over the windows which diminished the glare of the sun. Straight ahead, the rich brown

wood of the confessional and the altar was flanked on each side by icons of the Virgin Mary and the saints (Figure 1). The icons, partly concealed by lace curtains, were further obscured by the darkening of pigments and the varnish caused by the passage of time; yet, they were resolutely there, in a space where its clean whiteness spoke anachronistically for the new. The pictures sat unambiguously in the present. Veiled, as if too powerful for the unthinking glance, they were endowed with a singular physical and material presence that demanded attention. As such, they embodied an idea of the picture as something from which, in many respects, viewers had to be protected. In turn, in the chapel's isolation, the pictures themselves also seemed in need of protection. The chapel and its contents spoke for the affectivity and authority of pictures and bodied forth from its protective cloak the experience of a historical simultaneity of encounters, enfoldings and entanglements found in cultural memories and their visual manifestations, in what Aby Warburg called ghost stories for grown-ups (Michaud 2004, p. 24).



Figure 1. Interior of Greek Orthodox chapel, Naxos, Greece, Spring 2016 (Photograph by Jim Aulich).

Pictures are, in part, institutionally and/or structurally, defined by where they are seen (Gombrich 1950). Their site shapes understanding. In a religious building, a picture is primarily an object of devotion, while the same picture seen in a museum is perceived as a work of art, valued for its historical interest. In an art gallery, the picture would enjoin with the discourses of stylistic development and aesthetic quality; in a family photo album, it belongs to a particular domestic history, and so on. Nevertheless, the experience of the picture regardless of its theological, ideological, physical and institutional context does not wholly explain its cogency or affect.

In this volume, we can see how the pictorial and the physical, historical and institutional processes of picture-making bestow on pictures a capacity co-constitutive of the reality which the observer, participant, interpreter or maker inhabits as a participant in life and in politics (Aulich 2020). In what in recent years has become a fertile area of study, we seek to think around visibility and materiality beyond questions about what pictures do or want or the powers we invest in them. The attempt in this introduction is to shed new light and thinking on pictures as material objects; how they perform, act and feed into our subjectivities, experiences and realities. In some way, to account for their currency, duration, affectivity and authority beyond transparent representation or symbolic meaning.

From the fields of visual culture and art history, we deployed insights from Mitchell (2005) on what pictures 'want;' from Jens Eder and Charlotte Klonk's recent edited volume on *Image Operations* (2017) on how images 'operate;' and from picture science and the ontological concerns of Horst Bredekamp amongst others discussed below. Most significantly, we take the lead from Karen Barad (2007) theory of agential realism and apply it to pictures. In this framework, the worlds pictures create and the subjectivities they produce are not understood to precede the phenomena they depict. In the

collage-like ‘intra-action’ of their materiality, discursive and institutional spaces, pictures are objects in the world which we experience and of which we are an integral part. The picture is not understood as representational of a pre-existing reality, it produces a reality in the relationships from which it emerges. The picture, as the outcome of the apparatus which produces it makes an ‘observational cut’ that simultaneously excludes and includes certain elements from its frame. As such, it has to be comprehended as party to processes which are both ethical and political (Barad 2007), a fact which is particularly important during times of conflict and war.

1. Pictures and Conflicts

If the number of academic volumes on the subject of pictures in conflict in the last twenty years is anything to go by, then there is a sense of urgency to understand how pictures contribute to the realities we inhabit, especially at times of crisis, which any Marxist would claim as a permanent state of affairs.¹ Focusing on ‘non-moving’ pictures uncircumscribed by—yet including—the categories of reportage and photojournalism, the essays employ a multitude of methodological and epistemological approaches to the analysis of case studies across six continents. They demonstrate how pictures and the imaginaries they represent have been increasingly weaponised in war and conflict since 1945. Their inclusion does not concern a local or a thematic approach on the subject but offers a comparative plane from which to further understand a period that, particularly in the West, marked the transition to a new world order—a world in which the accelerated rate of change of technological scale and character has transformed the ways we conduct, participate, depict and consume conflict on a global scale. Each author in this volume construes conflict in a way pertinent to the case study under examination, which is always historically situated. Each is equally persistent in placing the visual at the heart of the analysis. The transnational and interdisciplinary approaches presented here examine the ways pictures function alongside, or in concert with verbal or written texts; or have deep relationships with, and are produced within, traditional, political, institutional, social, theological, aesthetic and other discourses.

2. The Ghost in the Machine

Pictures and images are two sides of the same coin: both migrate and are subject to decline and re-birth. One is the ghost in the machine; the other is its material embodiment. On one hand, the image through the imagination dispenses political power; on the other, the picture engages the bodily and the personal in terms of expressive power and empathetic response. Pictures are the material embodiments of the altogether more abstract, elusive and unformed image. Hans Belting and Mitchell make this important distinction between the picture and the image: ‘by “object” I mean the material support in or on which an image appears, or the material thing an image refers to or brings into view [. . .] By “medium” I mean the set of material practices that brings an image together with an object to produce a picture [. . .] understood as complex assemblages of virtual, material, and symbolic elements’ (Mitchell 2005, p. xiii). To paraphrase Mitchell, you can hang a picture, but you cannot hang an image.

Investigations into the issue began in earnest in the mid-1980s, just as studies into what later became known as image theory and visual culture began to emerge. The work of W. J. T. Mitchell in the Anglo-American world of scholarship, and in Germany among the so-called New Art Historians and the work of Hans Belting, Horst Bredekamp and Gottfried Boehm (Craven 2014) were important to these developments. In the United Kingdom, the New Art History (Rees and Borzello 1986) ploughed

¹ A list of relevant studies which is by no means exhaustive includes: Batchen et al. (2012). *Picturing Atrocity. Photography in Crisis*. London: Reaktion Books. Bourke (2017). *War. A Visual History of Modern Conflict and Art*, London: Reaktion Books; Eder and Klonk (2017). Introduction. In *Image Operations. Visual Media and Political Conflict*. Editors: Eder, Jens and Charlotte Klonk. Manchester: Manchester University Press; Kennedy and Patrick (2014). *The Violence of the Image. Photography and International Conflict*. London: I.B. Tauris; McLagan and McKee (2012). *Sensible Politics. The Visual Culture of Nongovernmental Action*. New York: Zone Books; Oldfield (2019). *Photography and war*. London: Reaktion Books; Stallabrass (2013). *Memory of Fire: Images of War and The War of Images*. Brighton: Photoworks.

a different furrow and deployed the social history of art and critical theory framed by Marx and Freud, articulated through Althusser's ideological state apparatuses and the reflections of the Frankfurt School and their fellow travellers Walter Benjamin and Herbert Marcuse. These were augmented by the insights of Roland Barthes, feminist critical theory and the linguistically-based critical tools developed by poststructuralists such as Norman Bryson.

Interestingly, Benjamin identified the loss of aura in his seminal essay 'The Work of art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility' (Benjamin 2003), but it is only recently, in the first two decades of the twenty-first century, that critical thought is beginning to apply itself to that questionable loss.² Norman Bryson, for example, admitted to the limitations of poststructuralist semiotic approaches which occlude embodied experiences such as sensory memory, affective resonance and the haptic, in favour of cognition, representation, code and meaning (Bryson 2003). These tools have not suddenly become redundant, nor have they lost their value but questions are being asked about how pictures operate and of the work that pictures do in our embodied understandings of the world.

During the Enlightenment, aesthetics, art history and the museum placed a distance between the picture and the spectator and any responses that viewed pictures as living beings that possessed agency were deemed primitive. Such reactions were replaced by concerns relating to form, style and iconography. Over recent decades, however, and in part inspired by the work of Aby Warburg, scholars of visual culture such as Georges Didi-Huberman, W.J.T. Mitchell, Bruno Latour, David Freedberg and Hans Belting, and most recently Horst Bredekamp and Caroline van Eck, have developed theories of the life of images possessed of the power and agency to change the realities they describe and we perceive. So, following on from the notion of *Bildwissenschaft*³ (picture science), promoted by Horst Bredekamp amongst others, and drawing on more traditional forms of art history represented by the figures of Ernst Cassirer and Edgar Wind, there is the injunction to assign to images materially manifested in pictures and sculpture an active force in shaping behaviour.

Bredekamp cites Leonardo da Vinci's 'maxim on the ability of a work of art to deprive its admirers of their freedom' (Bredekamp 2017, p. 43) an understanding which requires an appreciation of the interplay between pictures and living images. Conceptions of the picture as possessed of a kind of agency such as we find in icons from religious, political or popular cultural contexts are not new to critical thought. Alfred Gell, for example, had found a place for art, for which we might read pictures as actors functioning in networks of social relationships (Gell 1998). The picture acts in the world as if it were alive. This is not to ascribe animism to pictures, but to reveal them as agents in the exercise of authority as devotional objects or as certifications of authority and dissent, 'embodied and constituted in action' (Malafouris 2013, pp. 89–97). Photography and video, whether photochemically or digitally produced, carry with them the transparent capacity for pictures to take on characteristics of life and life to take on aspects of pictures through mimesis or likeness. Bredekamp cites the late eighteenth-century example of the *tableau vivant*, where performers threw the poses of not just the figures found in what was then the recently excavated murals of Pompeii, but also the casts taken from the voids in the volcanic ash left by people vapourised in the eruption of Vesuvius (Bredekamp 2017, pp. 83–84). Drawing on the excess and identity found in the picture to activate the observer into action, much as May Day celebrations 'functioned [politically] as temporary monuments as goals yet to be realized' (Bredekamp 2017, p. 86). Or, legalistically, to depict punishment in the absence of the perpetrator; or to utilise defamation to instrumentalise pictures in the battle against social inequality' (Bredekamp 2017, pp. 161–63). All these examples are cited by Bredekamp to illustrate the capacity of the image to capture subjectivities and motivate the observer to action in a number of discursive fields such as the sacred and the secular, the political and the legal; where the image in the form of the seal or the coin,

² That indeterminate excess as thinkers of a psychoanalytical persuasion such as Slavoj Žižek might have it (Žižek 1989).

³ For an extended discussion of the term *Bildwissenschaft* see James Elkins' introduction in, Elkins et al. (2013). *Theorizing visual studies: writing through the discipline*. New York: Routledge.

for example, become agents of sovereignty, power and authority, acting on the viewer as if they were real living persons.

Hans Belting (1996, 2011) recognised pictures as objects in themselves and, at the same time, as second-order objects insofar as they relate to, and often represent, other things, but like ourselves are part of the world we seek to comprehend. The problem is less the idea that representations might be descriptions, than how they might function as the practices, doings, or actions they articulate. In other words, pictures are rhetorical pointers beyond representation and depiction where visual properties are less important than questions of what they can do with regard to ethics, responsibility and authority (Eder and Klonk 2017, p. 225). Jens Eder and Charlotte Klonk have recently identified four essential potentials in images (Eder and Klonk 2017, pp. 9–10). Images can be *mimetic*: they look like, or what we imagine the object represented to look like, and have an immediate cognitive effect. They can have *symbolic* potential capable of condensing copious amounts of information to be grasped at a glance. Often semantically complex they are charged with multiple meanings anchored in a text to perform as image/texts (Mitchell 2015). Further, images can evoke *aesthetic sensual and affective* expressive responses rooted in bodily experiences and are perhaps ultimately related to the kind of highly charged forms of action identified by Aby Warburg and reiterated by Didi-Hubermann (Didi-Hubermann 2017). Additionally, in a conceptual approach that demonstrates how images ‘operate’ derived from the study of digital *interactive* images, Eder and Klonk (2017) parallel Mitchell’s position with regard to the instrumentality and agency of the image ‘as a tool of manipulation [...] and as an apparently autonomous source for its own purposes and meaning’ (Mitchell 2005, p. 351). The deployment of pictures inevitably draws into play the question of how they relate to similar pictures in previous usages and how we relate to our past. Pictures belong to a place and time in the present, and as bearers of images, they carry meanings haunted by the past. The power of the pictures which bear the image of the Virgin and the Saints inside the Greek Orthodox chapel discussed earlier, for example, rests in their contemporary currency, historical resonance and understanding of the values they evince: their imagery, style, physical context and material qualities.

Unlike the images they carry (Mitchell 2015, p. 16),⁴ pictures—whether in two or three-dimensional form—are potentially subject to the physical and historical abuse of abandonment, desecration and destruction; or alternatively, of religious enshrinement, social elevation and/or secular value in museums and galleries as part of historical or aesthetic narratives. Or, they might rest in less secure environments such as printed and virtual media where they are subject to censorship, burning, blocking or deletion. Historians such as F.R. Ankersmitt have pointed out that history itself proceeds by a necessary focus on ‘experiences of rupture’ (Ankersmitt 2005), moments of crisis and conflict in which one reality is superseded by another where that which has been left behind is destroyed. In Afghanistan, the Taliban demolished the Buddhas of Bamiyan in March 2001 and in Baghdad, American troops toppled the statue of Saddam Hussein in April 2003. Interestingly, both events were filmed and widely distributed as acts of warfare. There is no shortage of such technical, social, political and cultural ‘moments’ of superseded realities: World Wars, Cold War and the Collapse of Communism, Globalism and the financial and sociopolitical crises of 2007, the Digital Revolution, the rise of populism, and as we write these words in 2020, Covid-19. These are markers of change where a profound gap opens up between one truth and another (Ankersmitt 2005).

Because our experience of reality grows out of practices which we, the viewers, shape—and in turn—shape us, this makes us responsible for the world of which we are a part, and as such, leads us to new insights which simultaneously address matters of ethics, the nature of being and knowledge (Barad 2007, pp. 389–90). If it is possible to extrapolate from natural philosophy, then before the encounter, before the act of measurement, or, in our case, of picturing, the object of observation is

⁴ See Mitchell’s discussion of the biblical story of the Golden Calf and its representations in verbal and pictorial narratives in (Mitchell 2015, p. 16).

indeterminate. Bredekamp argues that images do not derive from reality: ‘They are, rather, a form of its condition. Images, through their own potency, empower those enlightened observers who fully recognise this quality. Images are not passive. They are begetters of every sort of experience and action related to perception. This is the quintessence of the image act’ (Bredekamp 2017, p. 283). In contrast to the Newtonian perspective, Barad concurs with Niels Bohr that no inherent distinction pre-exists the measurement process, and that every measurement involves a particular choice of apparatus with its own set of variable determinants. According to Barad, this process excludes other equally essential variables; the apparatuses of looking perform a particular constructed ‘observational cut’ which separates out the ‘object’ from the ‘agencies of observation’. In this way, inclusions and exclusions defined by the apparatus, or the agencies of observation, create the picture and the reality or value system it represents: ‘So the fact that its ontology changes when we change the apparatus is not a surprise, because we are investigating an entirely different phenomenon’ (Barad 2012). In other words, if the apparatus, or the practices of looking—understood as the collage-like relations between the maker, technologies, observer, interpreter and participant—shift as they might during ‘experiences of rupture,’ then the pictured and perceived reality is altered and that carries with it ethical responsibility.

3. Pictures and Bodies

The art historian Gabriele Werner has made observations on the nature of the picture as a thing capable of embracing all forms of visual manipulation in an expanded field beyond the immediate products of the hand. These reach as far as the keyboard and the algorithm and all are designed to produce a visual dataset of ‘epistemic agents’ informed by images in the mind’s eye and characterised by cultural traditions of picture-making (Werner 2015). Each, therefore, makes reference to other pictures in that ‘endless production of traces, where the place of the referent is always already occupied by another trace’ (Rheinberger 1997). Significantly, as both signifier and signified, the picture may be at the same time an iconic representation as well as the concrete embodiment of what is represented. In this latter case, it enacts or instantiates aspects of reality and joins the world of other objects. Cognition and understanding are not confined to what is inside the skull; they are inseparable from the relationships between body and the material things, including external symbols such as the pictures which serve to shape cognition and the realities we experience (Malafouris 2013). Drawing on Lambros Malafouris’s material engagement theory, we can argue that such objects operate causatively to establish a relationship where people both control the object and are controlled by it. So, the question then becomes—also drawing on Butler (1993)—how this thing performs, rather than to ask what it stands for (Aulich 2020).

In making a distinction between the image and the picture, the image is understood as something embodied in its medium whether it is analogue, virtual or corporeal. Meaning is produced in an integrative process between material and conceptual domains, between matter and mind. What is important is that the one who looks is inseparable from what is being looked at (Barad 2003). Each and every picture becomes part of the problem, each feeds off the phenomenon it emulates and challenges the Cartesian distinction between the picture and what it represents (Barad 2003, p. 803). Fascinatingly, these approaches come close to the classical Aristotelian identification of the subject and object of knowledge: our hands may come to ‘know’ an object by following its lines and in that act of imitation, the subject is moulded by the object of knowledge. The instantiation of expressive emotion is often perceived to become what it describes. In her study of the Byzantine icon, Caroline van Eck interrogates the role of rhetorical thought in the understanding of visual and verbal artefacts capable of inspiring images in the mind’s eye (Van Eck 2015). Analogous to images in memory, such artefacts are endowed with the power to re-create the experience of something absent, and through metaphor, something never directly lived (Aulich 2020, pp. 273–74).

4. The Economy of the Image

The widespread acceptance of the role beyond the symbolic register of the habits of hand and eye and the suite of actions brought into play when we interact with pictures as physical objects has led art historians such as Marie-José Mondzian to resurrect the concept of the economy of the image (Mondzian 2005).⁵ The concept derives from classical Greek systems of thought founded on visibility where the picture projects a silent and invisible excess that envelops or contains its meaning, ‘an enigma whose power never exhausts is never exhausted by the intelligibility of its signs’ (Mondzian 2005, p. 89). Like Mitchell and Belting, it is necessary to make a distinction between the invisible image and the visible icon (picture) and the linkage of the one to the other. As Mondzian writes: ‘The economy was the concept of their relation and their intimacy. The image is eternal similitude, the icon is temporal resemblance. The economy was the theory of the transfiguration of history’ (Mondzian 2005, p. 3). The economy supports the entire picture-making apparatus intellectually, ideologically and politically. In both, the Byzantine and contemporary eras are impossible to think or rule without images. Whomsoever controls the images, configures the reality and Mondzian poses the question: ‘in the rising tide of things to see, what image will we be left with on the shore when it retreats? Where is that rebel who will be the embodiment of our current freedom?’ (Mondzian 2005, p. 221). What is extraordinary in her study are the ways that Byzantine intellectuals linked the economy of the image to making temporal power visible in order to determine contemporaneous realities.

It is possible to see how the various aspects of the different visual cultures investigated by the essays in this volume create new realities. As the pictures themselves go to war, as it were, we can understand them as the material manifestations of conflicting imaginaries, or as Karen Barad might put it, they are the visible results of ‘apparatuses’ that configure the world to produce sensory phenomena in which we are a constitutive part, rather than a distant observer (Barad 2007). Before the encounter, before the act of measurement, or, in our case, of picturing, the object of observation is indeterminate. In these conditions, the picture is made by means of the apparatus and its observational cut, which involves the human and nonhuman processes necessary for the generation of pictures from the hands and eyes of the maker, the observer and the interpreter, the observed object, its imaginary and medium, in a reality where nothing is independent from anything else (Prophet and Pritchard 2015, p. 335). It is less the case of pictures representing particular aspects of reality, than their capacity to contribute to the production of material reality as we experience it. According to Jane Prophet and Helen Pritchard, ‘The agential realist discussion of representation is premised on an understanding that the act of making representations is performative and that representations and the objects they propose to represent are not independent of each other’ (Prophet and Pritchard 2015, p. 338). We might extend the analogy from the philosophy of science to understand the apparatus, as Richard Grusin does in his concept of radical mediation: to regard the medium supporting the picture as an object subject to processes of intra-action where the boundaries between people, matter, materials, nature and discourse emerge as phenomena in the world (Grusin 2015; Aulich 2020).

5. Pictures and Conflicts since 1945, This Volume

Pictures of conflict contribute to the ‘war of images’, where pictures and bodies can be exchanged. The essays in this volume largely focus on the image as a physical, optical or material experience rather than an imagined or a psychological one. They look at pictures as objects which can be seen. Occupying a space between the mind and their material manifestation in pictures, images are found embedded in a multitude of media from the unique painting on canvas to print multiples, and from the photomechanical photograph, to electronically stimulated pixels generated on a screen with the capacity for infinite reproduction.

⁵ In an analysis of Byzantine iconoclasm in the 8th and 9th centuries Mondzian plots the implications for the ‘contemporary imaginary’ of the struggles over the authority of the icon or picture (Mondzian 2005).

Through various apparatuses, people and institutions can be accorded authority or can be undermined as if they were pictures and *vice versa*. In an analysis of the Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts by Wiktor Komorowski, for example, contemporary prints are located in an exhibited role as a physical object rather than as a representation or expression of something else. Significantly, Komorowski argues that for its curators, the Ljubljana Biennial functioned as part of a complex geopolitical, curatorial and aesthetic apparatus deployed to assert the national and cultural visibility of the non-aligned countries during the Cold War. By virtue of its appropriation of the apparatus of a state-controlled art world, this oppositional strategy proved to be something of a success.

Jennifer Way's contribution, on the other hand, demonstrates how the reality created on the pages of an interior design magazine naturalised North Vietnamese refugees for the benefit of the American public through the configuration of a series of photographs. Published in *Interiors* in the 1950s, the photographs functioned as part of the visual cultural apparatus of the American State Department to present a phenomenon where colonialism, conflict, fear, hardship and the emotional upheaval associated with displacement, was dissipated in favour of a world of productive work and consumerism. The 'look' of the pictures framed this reality within a contemporary and fashionable existential aestheticism which spoke for individualism and destiny, also shared by the readers of the magazine. In her analysis, the apparatus is—as is the case of Paul Lowe's essay—candid: the wider apparatus of the photo essay depoliticises the 'refugee problem'.

Pertinent to the chronological frame of this volume, Bredekamp's analyses lead to the important conclusion that, in asymmetrical warfare, increasingly characteristic of military engagements since the end of Second World War, the material manifestation of imagery in pictures contributes to what it means to wage war. This is especially significant for those who are technologically disadvantaged as is the case in the essays in this volume by Gary Bratchford, Ray Drainville and Dalia Habib Linssen. Linssen points out that the territory of the battlefield extends beyond physical reality and into the virtual. She writes, 'in the fact that eyes, in as far as they can be reached [...] become a means and an end in this new unboundedness.' As Warburg proposed, bodies can be images or can be destroyed in the name of images, and in the act of looking at the image and/or the observer are liable to capture.

Ray Drainville's essay, establishes that pictorial tweets are images that can be analysed through traditional methodologies such as iconography and iconology where the survival and migration of images are integral to their understanding. In his analysis of viewers' responses to the Black Lives Matter Movement, Drainville investigates pictorial tweets that have become iconic in their power to enter contemporary conflicts. He demonstrates how the picture bodies forth the material image in an analogue or virtual form to give shape to an 'image' at a singular point in its circulation or migration in time, geography and medium. Pictures, in this analysis, tellingly carry the imaginary of the symptoms of their previous usages.

Similarly, Linssen's essay investigates the iconicity of a digital image in her analysis of the photograph of the woman with the *blue bra*: one of the most famous symbols of gender politics and political dissent associated with the Arab Spring in 2011. Linssen traces its online presence as a picture-symbol through to its afterlife as a physical representation on banners and graffiti. She argues that access and distribution to the 'expanded realm of digital media' creates a space between private and public platforms of visibility. In their mobility, such pictures of conflict become critical sites of resistance and markers of collective memory.

For Gary Bratchford, the political question centres around access to visibility and who has the right to produce the 'right image' of a Palestinian village and its struggle. He shows how the challenge to the dominant visible order is ultimately stymied by the limits of the apparatuses applied because of their dependence on stereotypical responses. Consequently, the reality generated is shown to be insufficiently robust to create the desired iconoclastic effect and a new reality beyond publicity for the Palestinian cause.

In the consideration of the mainstream media's institutional frame, Simon Faulkner identifies the centrality of the observer's cut in the construction of representation of the image of the Palestinian

cause and its denial. Faulkner follows a chronological order of ‘events’ (Azoulay 2014) reported in the international media between 1948 and the present and argues for the need to excavate and examine *Palestinian visual politics within their historical context in order to determine the integral role that the apparatuses of visual mediation in the mainstream media have played within this struggle*.

In Louise Purbrick’s case study, postcards ‘draw together the domestic and the political [...] cross the separations of capitalism and conflict’. In her essay, the visible and written record preserved in the archive is re-configured through the prism of the postcard to produce a phenomenon which elicits connections between nineteenth-century exploitation and twentieth-century repression in Chile. Here, we can see how it is possible to address the question of what pictures ‘do’; where their agency is derived and what are the possibilities generated by enactments capable of re-configuring material-discursive apparatuses and which, therefore, are ethically accountable. Material phenomena produced in the entanglement of objects and agencies of observation, dynamically create physical reality, matter and meaning. What comes to matter and what is excluded from mattering is crucial (Barad 2007), a point well-evidenced in the revelation of the mechanisms of the postcard as a rhetorical pointer.

Inspired by feminist writer Donna Haraway, Barad set out the case for a ‘diffractive methodology’ that reads one insight through others to recognise ‘differences that matter’ (Barad 2012). Where ‘a different material-discursive apparatus [...] materializes different configurations of the world, not merely a different description of a fixed and independent reality’ (Barad 2012). These machinations are clear in the discussions undertaken by Bernadette Buckley and Paul Lowe, both of whom discuss how pictures can be deployed through interweaving temporalities to deconstruct the dominant apparatuses of war photography. Buckley engages in close readings of two *War Primers*: the original Bertolt Brecht’s *Kriegsfibel* (1955) and its dialectical ‘re-activation’ in 2011 by artists Broomberg and Chanarin. In the intricate threads of the past, present and the future, she observes the deployment of images in the expanded canon of war photography: as ‘such formidable and at the same time, such unreliable weapons’ in their representational capacity to present truth. Buckley argues that Brecht’s *Kriegsfibel* and Broomberg and Chanarin’s *War Primer 2* enter into a series of re-doublings to deconstruct the apparatuses of war photography. As a shifting assemblage, the *War Primers* decipher, intervene and take responsibility for the realities offered by officially instrumentalised apparatuses of representation. Ultimately, they invite us to take a position. Buckley employs the concept of the ‘hack’ referencing McKenzie Wark’s *A Hacker Manifesto* in which the author states that ‘While we create these new worlds, we do not possess them. [...] We do not own what we produce—it owns us’ (Wark 2004). The persuasive power of pictures is recognised and reset and through the creation of different realities, the operation and control of violence is questioned. Through the prisms of different apparatuses, they summon us into a more confrontational and complex seeing that challenges the authority of images.

Paul Lowe’s essay examines how pictures can be deployed through interweaving temporalities to deconstruct the dominant apparatuses of war photography to produce something more respectful of the victim. Lowe establishes the dual materiality of the picture of conflict: of the photograph as an object printed on paper combining to create a tangible secular memento of the victim. For him, in certain kinds of documentary photography, the ‘forensic turn’ as an apparatus is more straightforwardly the lens through which the world is seen: ‘The dichotomy between what is seen on the surface of the image and what is known about the image’s context creates a space where the viewer must do more work to make sense of what the photograph is or does’. Lowe argues that photographs contain traces that can be elevated ‘from the status of unnoticed elements into’ materials and ‘significant carriers of emotional and psychological depth and meaning’. In other words, the monopolies of the forensic apparatuses of investigation and evidence-gathering affirm or challenge the discursive boundaries of photography from reportage to the evidential. As such, they produce different phenomena subject to different readings where the perpetrator, victim and photographer are ethically enfolded.

The apparatuses for producing visual representations of conflict and war and their interpretations are in a perpetual state of becoming. These are encountered directly in the visual essay by Lyndell

Brow, Charles Green, Jon Cattapan and Paul Gough in which the four artists started the process of constructing ‘an atlas of global conflict’. Their essay shows how art practices and the roles of observers, makers and viewers in the Global South have been determined by war, geopolitics, post-colonialism and art historical discourse. The vital political and therefore ethical question is where the boundaries fall, what and why does the particular apparatus include or exclude. The apparatus consists of people and things, picture and image, subject and object, discourse and material, culture and nature, all of which radically interdependent and co-constituted phenomena in ways that are at times unpredictably overdetermined. Ultimately, they are unknowable; always just out of reach, yet deeply implicated in what we do and how we perceive ourselves in the world.

The picture has haptic qualities, the image, as a phantasm, does not. Its ‘lives’ are captured between the varied manifestations in the picture and the observer’s mind. In the imagination, the image summons from the picture abstract notions of legitimacy, sovereignty, memory and identity and the challenge to them all. These entanglements or intra-actions, a montage-like laying of juxtapositions, are an indissoluble part of ‘our beings, our psyches, our imaginations, our institutions, our societies’ (Barad 2007, p. 383). Continuing to think with Barad, ‘representations are not (more or less faithful) pictures of what is, but productive evocations, provocations, and generative articulations or re-configuring of what is and what is not possible’ (Barad 2007, p. 389). In the battle of images looking and seeing are complex processes and as such, are subject to different apparatuses of observation, which in all of their entangled complexities, lead to experiencing the world in different ways.

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